

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 16355

EXDIS (DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS)

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (FIRST LINE TEXT)

DEPT PASS VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR PEPR PGOV EG IS
SUBJECT: SADAT'S IDEA OF HOLDING FONMINS' TALKS AT
AL ARISH AND BEERSHEVA

SUMMARY: SADAT FHAS FOR PAST SIX MONTHS TOYED WITH THE IDEA

OF ALTERNATING AL ARISH/BEERSHEVA SITES FOR ANY DAYAN/KAMEL
MEETINGS. HIS THOUGHT HAD BEEN THAT AFTER INITIAL
MEETING OF POLITICAL COMMITTEE IN JERUSALEM, FURTHER
MEETINGS MIGHT TAKE PLACE AT AL ARISH/BEERSHEVA. FOLLOWING
ABORTIVE JANUARY POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING, THE IDEA
BECAME TEMPORARILY DORMANT. IT HAS RECENTLY BEEN REVIVED
AS A RESULT OF OUR EFFORTS TO RE-ESTABLISH SOME KIND OF
DIRECT EGYPTIAN/ISRAELI TALKS. SADAT BELIEVES AN AL ARISH
VENUE WOULD DEMONSTRATE TO EGYPTIANS AND OTHER ARABS
THAT ISRAELIS RECOGNIZE EGYPTIAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER SINAI
AND ARE SERIOUS ABOUT NEGOTIATING WITHDRAWAL ISSUES. FROM
PRACTICAL POINT OF VIEW, IT WOULD MEAN THAT KAMEL WOULD BE
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NEARER AND MORE QUICKLY ABLE TO REPORT TO SADAT AND OBTAIN
NEW INSTRUCTIONS. NOT ALL EGYPTIANS ARE ENAMoured OF
SADAT'S AL ARISH IDEA. KAMEL, AS AN ARDENT EGYPTIAN
NATIONALIST, FINDS IT GALLING TO GO TO EGYPTIAN TERRITORY
WHICH THE ISRAELIS ARE OCCUPYING. MANY OTHER EGYPTIANS
WILL PROBABLY HAVE SIMILAR VIEW. IF TALKS HELD AT AL ARISH/
BEERSHEVA SHOW REASONABLY QUICK PROGRESS, SADAT'S JUDGMENT

WILL BE VINDICATED; IF THEY DO NOT, HE WILL HAVE GIVEN HIS CRITICS ADDITIONAL AMMUNITION WITH WHICH TO ATTACK HIM. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING IS ANALYSIS THAT YOU REQUESTED OF SADAT'S REFERENCE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF HOLDING MEETINGS BETWEEN KAMEL AND DAYAN ALTERNATIVELY AT AL ARISH AND BEERSHEVA:

2. SADAT HAS BEEN TOYING WITH THIS IDEA FOR SOME TIME. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT THE ISMAILIA MINI-SUMMIT OF CHRISTMAS DAY, 1977, DECIDED ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITTEES, CONSISTING OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE RESPECTIVELY. POLITICAL COMMITTEE WOULD MEET IN JERUSALEM, WHILE MILITARY COMMITTEE WOULD MEET IN CAIRO. ALTHOUGH SADAT ACCEPTED PRIMIN BEGIN'S PROPOSAL, THE EGYPTIANS NEVER DID LIKE THE IDEA THAT THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE WOULD REGULARLY MEET IN JERUSALEM. THEY RECOGNIZED THAT IT WOULD SUBJECT THEM TO CONSTANT ARAB, INCLUDING ALL-IMPORTANT SAUDI, CRITICISM FOR HOLDING MEETINGS WITH THE ISRAELIS ON WHAT THE ISLAMIC WORLD REGARDS AS SACRED SOIL UPON WHICH THE ISRAELIS ARE ILLEGALLY TRESPASSING. ON THE MILITARY SIDE, THERE WAS NO REAL PROBLEM SINCE WEIZMAN REGULARLY TRAVELLED TO CAIRO FOR MEETINGS WITH GAMASY. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, HOWEVER, THE IDEA OF AN ALTERNATING AL ARISH/BEERSHEVA VENUE IN PLACE OF JERUSALEM BEGAN TO BE MENTIONED BY SADAT FROM EARLY JANUARY ONWARDS. IT SECRET

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WAS HIS CONCEPT AT THE TIME THAT THESE SITES MIGHT FOLLOW THE INITIAL JERUSALEM POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING. SINCE THAT MEETING ABORTED AS A RESULT OF HIS WITHDRAWAL OF THE EGYPTIAN DELEGATION, THE SUBJECT REMAINED TEMPORARILY DORMANT.

3. BUT THE IDEA STILL STICKS IN SADAT'S CRAW. IN JUNE OF THIS YEAR WE AGAIN SOUNDED OUT SADAT ON WHETHER HE WOULD BE WILLING TO MEET WITH DAYAN. HE REFUSED, BUT AGREED THAT KAMEL MIGHT MEET WITH DAYAN. AS ONE POSSIBLE VENUE FOR SUCH A MEETING, HE MENTIONED AL ARISH. (WHILE HE DID NOT AT THE TIME SPEAK OF BEERSHEVA, I AM SURE THAT THIS WAS SIMPLY AN OVERSIGHT.) IT WAS NO SURPRISE, THEREFORE, WHEN SADAT AGAIN MENTIONED THE AL ARISH/BEERSHEVA ALTERNATE VENUE IN HIS TALK WITH YOU.

4. SADAT HAS TWO REASONS FOR FAVORING THIS VENUE:

A. POLITICALLY SPEAKING, HE BELIEVES THAT POLITICAL (OR MILITARY) MEETINGS BETWEEN EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI LEADERS AT AL ARISH WILL PROJECT AN IMPRESSION AT HOME AND IN THE ARAB WORLD THAT GOE IS CONFIDENT THAT

OCCUPIED SINAI WILL BE RETURNED AND THAT THE ISRAELIS, BY AGREEING TO ALTERNATING AL ARISH/BEERSHEVA SITES, ARE IN EFFECT ACCEPTING THIS CONCEPT. AL ARISH IS THE ADMINISTRATIVE CAPITAL OF NORTHERN SINAI. HENCE, A MEETING THERE WOULD HAVE CONSIDERABLE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE IN EGYPTIAN EYES.

B. SADAT RECOGNIZES THAT KAMEL, BEING SOMEWHAT INFLEXIBLE, NEEDS CLOSE SUPERVISION IN ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH DAYAN. HE BELIEVES THAT AN AL ARISH/BEERSHEVA VENUE FOR SUCH MEETINGS WILL ALLOW BOTH KAMEL AND DAYAN TO RETURN TO THEIR RESPECTIVE CAPITALS MORE QUICKLY AND REGULARLY IN ORDER TO REPORT AND OBTAIN NEW INSTRUCTIONS. THE FLYING DISTANCE BETWEEN AL ARISH AND CAIRO AND/OR

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ALEXANDRIA WOULD BE NO MORE THAN 40 MINUTES BY HELICOPTER.

5. ALTHOUGH SADAT TOLD YOU THAT ALL THE ARABS WOULD FAVOR AN AL ARISH MEETING SITE, THIS IS PROBABLY AN OVERSTATEMENT. ONE WHO STRONGLY OBJECTS IS FONMIN KAMEL WHO, AS AN ARDENT EGYPTIAN NATIONALIST, FINDS IT GALLING TO MEET WITH ISRAELIS IN OCCUPIED EGYPTIAN TERRITORY. I SUSPECT THERE ARE MANY OTHER EGYPTIAN NATIONALISTS WHO WOULD SHARE THE KAMEL VIEW. MUCH WOULD DEPEND UPON HOW QUICKLY SOMETHING POSITIVE EMERGED FROM A SERIES OF KAMEL/DAYAN TALKS HELD AT AL ARISH/BEERSHEVA VENUE. IF THERE IS RELATIVELY EXPEDITIOUS PROGRESS, THEN SADAT'S AL ARISH SITE PREFERENCE WILL BE VINDICATED. IF NOT, HE WILL HAVE GIVEN HIS CRITICS MORE AMMUNITION WITH WHICH TO ATTACK HIM. SOME OF HIS ARAB CRITICS MAY ALSO CHARGE THAT MEETINGS AT AL ARISH DEMONSTRATE THAT SADAT'S PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO CONCLUDE A SEPARATE SINAI SETTLEMENT. THIS WOULD PROBABLY BE ANSWERABLE TO THOSE OF HIS ARAB CRITICS WHO ARE WILLING TO LISTEN BY NOTING

THE NATURE OF THE TALKS UNDERWAY, E.G. WEST BANK/GAZA
ISSUES.

6. I LEAVE TO SAM LEWIS WHETHER OR NOT THE ISRAELIS
WOULD FIND ALTERNATING AL ARISH/BEERSHEVA MEETING SITES
ATTRACTIVE. EILTS

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